

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DACCA 03812 271025Z

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1474

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, ENRG, EINV, BG, IN, US

SUBJ: INDO-BANGLADESH BOUNDARY DISPUTES

REF: (A) STATE 182107, (B) NEW DELHI 10855

1. THERE HAS BEEN NO PROGRESS TOWARD AGREEMENT ON THE INDO-BANGLADESH MARITIME BOUNDARY SINCE APRIL, 1975 (75 DACCA 1707 AND 1919), ACCORDING TO AN INDIAN HIGH COMMISSION OFFICIAL. WE AGREE.
2. THE HICOM OFFICIAL DID MENTION THAT A VERY RECENT GOI MARITIME ACT (1976) PROCLAIMING A 200-MILE ZONE, CONTAINS A PROVISION (IN ARTICLE IX) LIMITING THE ZONE TO THE MARITIME BOUNDARY WITH OTHER COUNTRIES, AND STATING THAT IN CASES WHERE THERE WAS NO AGREEMENT, THE EQUIDISTANT LINE WOULD BE CONSIDERED THE BOUNDARY UNTIL AN AGREEMENT OR INTERIM UNDERSTANDING HAS BEEN REACHED.
3. OF POSSIBLE RELATED INTEREST, HICOM OFFICIAL ALSO SAID THAT THE PROCESS OF DEMARCATING THE INDO-BANGLADESH LAND BOUNDARY HAD BEEN PROCEEDING UNINTERRUPTEDLY AND SMOOTHLY THROUGHOUT THE POST-MUJIB PERIOD, WITH SURVEY PARTIES OF BOTH COUNTRIES CROSSING THE BORDER REGULARLY WITHOUT INCIDENT.

4. COMMENT. WHILE THERE APPEARED TO BE SOME MOVEMENT TOWARD AC-
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PAGE 02 DACCA 03812 271025Z

COMMODATION ON THE MARITIME BOUNDARY DURING MUJIB'S ERA, IT MAY BE

THAT AT LEAST ON THE BDG SIDE THE ISSUE IS BACK TO SQUARE ONE NOW. IN APRIL PRIOR TO THE LOS SESSION IN NEW YORK, AN MFA OFFICIAL EXPLAINED TO EMBOFF THAT BDG STILL HELD TO VIEW THAT, BECAUSE OF BANGLADESH'S UNUSUAL CONCAVE COASTLINE, ITS MARITIME BOUNDRIES SHOULD BE BASED UPON EQUITY NOT THE EQUIDISTANT PRINCIPLE. THE BDG WAS BACK TO ARGUING THAT THE SWATCH OF NO GROUND, A DEEP THROUGH OFF THE JOINT COASTLINE, IN EFFECT LIMITED INDIA'S CLAIM TO BANGLADESH'S ADVANTAGE, A POSITION WHICH INDIA HAS CONSISTNETLY REJECTED. AT THE LOST SESSION THE BDG ALSO LINKED ITS NOVEL BASE- LINE PROPOSAL (SET AT A SPECIFIC WATER DEPTH RATHER THAN LAND- MARKS) TO THE DELIMITATION ISSUE. DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE BDG RECEIVED LITTLE IF NO SUPPORT ON EITHER ITS BASELINE OR DELIMITA- TION POSITION AT LOS, WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT THEY HAVE RE- TREATED FROM THESE POSITIONS. GIVEN THE CURRENT STATE OF INDO-BANGLADESH RELATIONS, WE AGREE WITH NEW DELHI'S VIEW THAT A BOUNDRY SETTLEMENT IS UNLIKELY IN THE NEAR FUTURE. BOATER

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